Bar on candidates for contesting from more than one constituency

5433. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to introduce any Bill regarding proposal to bar candidates from contesting elections from more than one Lok Sabha constituency; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) No, sir. A proposal to bar candidates from contesting elections from more than one Lok Sabha Constituency was discussed in the all-party meeting on electoral reforms held on 22.5.1998 and the consensus in the meeting was in favour of maintaining *status quo.* The view has also found endorsement from the Election Commission of India.

Electoral Reforms

5434. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken fresh initiatives to finalise and introduce Electoral Reforms;

(b) if so, the details of the steps taken in this regard and the results thereof; and

(c) the details of time bound action plan to deal with comprehensive electoral reforms and action plan for the current year?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Government keeps reviewing the electoral laws. A meeting of the political parties was held on 22.5.1998 Recently, a meeting of leaders of political parties wa:, again convened on 13.5.2000 to discuss the issue of extending, upto the yea<- 2026, the current constitutional embargo on undertaking fresh delimitation of electoral constituencies which is going to expire with the publication of figures of the next population census, and some other connected issues. Follow-up action is under examination.

(c) Amendment in electoral laws is a serious and contentious subject arid, therefore, considerable time and attention are needed. It is, therefore, not

possible to give any definite date and time for completion of the process of electoral reforms. Moreover, new issues keep coming up in the light of the experience gained in the election matters.

Overcrowding in Jails

5435. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the NHRC has recently asked all the Chief Justices of High Courts to tackle overcrowding in Jails and long pendency of cases;

' (b) if so, whether the members of the NHRC visited prisons in various parts of the country and mismanagement of prison administration also came to their notice;

(c) whether in view of overcrowding in Jails the Government would extend assistance to High Courts by appointing additional judges etc. to dispose of the cases; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Both Government and Judiciary are concerned with overcrowding in jails which is primarily due to the presence of large number of undeFtrial prisoners. The Supreme Court of India has recently issued some direction in the case — R.D. Upadhyay Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh and Others regarding speedy disposal of cases involving under trial prisoners.

The High Courts of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Calcutta, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Sikkim have informed that necessary steps are being teken to speed up the disposal of under trial cases.

The High Court of Delhi, *vide* its judgement dated 25.11.1999 in Crl. writ 681/99, Essang Nydng & Others *Vs.* State of New Delhi, has directed the State Legal Services Authority to explore the possibility of holding Lok Adalats for taking up the cases of prisoners involved in petty crimes.

In addition, the Government has been taking various steps for early disposal of cases including appointment of more-Judges in High Courts o I the basis of norms/workload.